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ABSTRACT

This paper describes five research projects carried out by the Centre for the Study of Conflicts, of the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. The projects were concerned with investigations into the role of education in a divided society such as Northern Ireland. The project titles include: Inter School Links; The Philosophy and Practice of Integrated Schools; The Curriculum of Integrated Schools; The Role of Parents and Teachers in Integrated Schools; and Attitudes to Integrated Education. A 17-item resource list of papers on education in the divided society of Northern Ireland is included. (DB)

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VALUE EDUCATION IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY

by

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The Centre for the Study of Conflict currently houses a number of funded research projects concerned with investigations into the role of education in a divided society. These are described in some detail below. For further details, contact: Seamus Dunn, University of Ulster at Coleraine, Tel. 0265-44141 Ext 4261.

1. Inter School Links.

Director Seamus Dunn
Researcher Alan Smith

An award of £100,375 from the Department of Education, Northern Ireland. This is a four year research and development project carried out in association with the Western Education and Library Board on the development of structured long-term links Between Catholic and Protestant schools in one community. An interim report will be available in the Autumn and the project is due for completion in 1990.

It is a successor of two earlier researches, published at the University of Ulster at Coleraine, titled Schools Apart?, (1977) and Schools Together?, (1984). It is concerned with the contribution that the two schools systems in Northern Ireland might make to the promotion of cross community relations, in particular through the development of structured and coherent inter school links.

It is trying to seek answers to questions such as the following:
What can schools do, and what do schools do, to ameliorate the consequences of separation? What forms do joint activities or partnerships or inter school involvements take?

How can inter school cooperation be generated and made part of the fabric of a school so that it persists after the period of the project?

What resources are needed to make cooperation feasible, and how can they be costed?

How can successful procedures and initiatives be transferred and disseminated to other schools and to other areas?

Which approaches fail, or do not persist, and why? There is a tendency for initiatives not to survive after the project ends. Can this be avoided?

The project has both a development aspect and a research aspect. The development part has involved bringing together a group of teachers from controlled and maintained schools in one community and encouraging them to meet and create a programme of inter school activities. This was facilitated through the appointment of a field officer by the Western Education and Library Board. The research part has been the responsibility of a research officer appointed by the Centre for the Study of Conflict, University of Ulster at Coleraine, and his task has been to monitor, evaluate and record the life of the project.

The three main characteristics of the project are that it is interventionist, consultative and structured. It is interventionist in that it arose from an initiative originating outside the schools. It is consultative in that the teachers and principals are involved in all aspects of its planning and development and that they feel a genuine sense of ownership about it. It is also structured in that it was intended that the work being planned would arise out of long-term and educationally serious projects with some chance of enduring in the long term and this demanded some form of developed structure.

The extended project has three main areas of concern, each with specific aims. These are, consolidating the work of the first phase, further dissemination of the work, and the development of systems of evaluation for inter community work of this kind. Evaluation is now considered to be of particular importance in the light of the increase in the range and quantity of this work generally.

2. The Philosophy and Practice of Integrated Schools.

Director Seamus Dunn
Associated Staff Valerie Morgan, John Darby and Ed Cairns.
Researcher Dorothy Wilson.

An award of £6,250 from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This will lead to the production of a booklet for parents who are considering sending their children to integrated schools. The booklet will provide information on the philosophy, intentions and mode of operation of these schools. It is planned to have the booklet available in 1990.

A unique feature of the new schools is that their establishment and planning has been done by parents, who are therefore involved from the beginning in defining educational structures and systems to suit their own needs. This has involved them in processes

which are complex and time-consuming, and for which they have normally had no training. They have become involved in such matters as dealing with government bodies, seeking finance, appointing staff, and planning of the school curriculum.

The central purpose of this project is to examine these matters in detail and to produce a booklet of guidance for all parents involved with the new integrated schools. This will include material relevant both to parents becoming involved with the establishment of new schools, and to parents wishing to send their children to existing integrated schools. It will also act as an introduction for parents to the particular ethos of the integrated school movement. It will therefore be a practical handbook in the first instance, but it will also deal with the important issues and principles.

3. The curriculum of Integrated Schools.

Director Seamus Dunn
Associated Staff Valerie Morgan, John Darby and Ed Cairns.
Researcher Christopher Bowring-Carr

An award of £36,000 from the Leverhulme Trust. This project will consider the curriculum of the integrated schools with particular reference to the concept of multicultural education. It is due to finish in 1990.

The project involves a careful theoretical and empirical examination of what it means to talk about a multicultural (or bicultural) curriculum for the schools of Northern Ireland. This clearly raises more general questions about such matters as identity, the nature of the division in Northern Ireland, and the relationships between schools and society and the extent to which education can have a role in changing and forming the prevailing social and political ethos.

The integrated schools were founded because there was a view that school separation had important social and cultural consequences: therefore it is important to establish the intentions and aspirations of the founding groups, with regard to the ethos of these schools, and with regard to the how this was to be made manifest in the school curriculum. Such information must be carefully examined with regard to its underlying and overt ideologies, and with respect to its intended direct links with cultural differences in the specific Northern Irish context.

Since some of the schools are currently just getting started, an investigation of this kind can try to include all the successive development stages in the generation of a curriculum. In particular there is the unique feature that the initiative in the establishment and planning of these schools comes from parents,

so that the first stages in the design of the curriculum involves parents in a manner that is both powerful and unusual. More generally a number of important and difficult curricular and social issues are raised by this process of generating a community curriculum. Such matters are obviously of considerable importance for Northern Ireland, but they also have much wider international implications and this includes the obvious parallels with the problems of the development of multi-cultural curricula in Britain and elsewhere.

4. The Role of Parents and Teachers in Integrated Schools.

Director Valerie Morgan
Associated Staff Seamus Dunn, John Darby and Ed Cairns
Researcher Grace Frazer

An award of £29,520 from Economic and Social Research Council. This project will examine the role of parents and teachers in the management and decision making processes of the integrated schools. The project is due to finish in 1990.

Parents rights and parental involvement in school management are, in the light of current British government thinking, major issues in education. Recent legislation concerning parent governors on the boards of management of schools, and requirements for regular parents meetings and reports to parents by the principal, point clearly in the direction of increased parent participation and wider accountability. Some of the provisions of the new Education Bill also indicate the increasing importance of parental participation in education in the future. The experiences of the parents and teachers connected with the planned integrated schools in Northern Ireland are likely to be of considerable relevance in all these areas and may provide valuable empirical data about the operation of schools where parents are directly concerned with all aspects of management and curriculum.

This study has, therefore, both a strong practical basis and direct policy implications, as well as being related to a number of important theoretical models or perspectives. For example, since it will look at issues related to the management of the schools, the roles of parents and teachers in management and accountability, it will involve a consideration of aspects of management theory, particularly as it relates to educational contexts and to the concepts of accountability and parental participation. In addition, the changes in attitude and practise demanded of both parents and teachers by the management structures of the schools and the tensions and compromises demanded in this process mean that insights arising from innovation theory may be important.

It is therefore intended that the research will make a positive and practical contribution at two levels. First it will make a specific contribution to understanding the development of the planned integrated schools by examining the types of problems which arise over parental involvement and the range of solutions which have been tried. Second, the findings will contribute valuable empirical data to the on-going debate in the rest of the United Kingdom about the organisation and control of schools, and the implications both of wider parental involvement and a greater degree of teacher-parent interaction.

5. Attitudes to Integrated Education.

Director Ed Cairns
Associated Staff Seamus Dunn, John Darby and Valerie Morgan
Researcher Melanie Pollard

An award of £3,000 from the Allen Lane Foundation and the Rank Foundation.

There have been numerous surveys purporting to examine attitudes to integrated education in Northern Ireland over the past twenty years, but all have been flawed in three ways. First, none of them have ever used a proper scientific approach to sampling, all relying on quota sampling. Second, the questions asked have been either vague or hypothetical, since no actual integrated schools were available. This means that questions like 'do you support integrated education' were unrealistic. Third, many of those asked did not have children of school-going age, so the question was not a real one for them.

The present study aims to overcome these problems by using random sampling, by researching only the mothers of preschool children, and by conducting the research in an area where an integrated school actually exists. In addition to identifying the proportion who intend to send their children to an integrated school, and their background, an attempt will be made to understand the factors influencing such a decision. The project is due to finish in 1989.

Recent Papers on Education in a Divided Society.

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Dunn, Seamus (1985) 'Co-operation Between Segregated Schools', *Fortnight*, 4/17th February.

Dunn, Seamus (1985) 'Schools Together', *The Tablet*, 9th March.

Dunn, Seamus (1986) 'Education and Conflict in Northern Ireland: a Guide to the Literature', *Centre for the Study of Conflict*, University of Ulster, pp. 100.

Dunn, Seamus (1986) 'The Education Debate in Northern Ireland: the Integrated Option', *Studies*, Vol. 75, No. 299, Autumn pp.308-317.

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Dunn, Seamus (1986) 'Integrated Schools in Northern Ireland', a Paper Prepared for the *Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights*, Northern Ireland, pp. 28.

Darby, John and Dunn, Seamus (1987) 'Segregated Schools and the Research Evidence' chapter in *Education and Policy in Northern Ireland*, edited by R.D. Osborne, et al, Belfast: Policy Research Institute.

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Dunn, Seamus (1988) 'Northern Ireland Schools: Isolation, Communication or Integration', *L'Irlande Politique et Sociale*, Vol. 2.

DUNN, SEAMUS (1988) Inter School Links in Northern Ireland, in: Robinson, Alan (Ed) *Education for Mutual Understanding, Roles and Responsibilities* (Coleraine, University of Ulster).

Dunn, Seamus (1988) 'Education, Religion and Cultural Change in Ireland', chapter in *Religion, Educational Provision and National Identity*, edited by Witold Tulasiewicz and Colin Brock, London: Croom Helm.

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